



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

AFGHANISTAN

FIRST PERSON Proud to Serve Her Community

A community health worker in Bamyan Province improves the health of women and children



Photo: USAID/HSSP

“I always want my villagers, especially mothers and children, to be healthy. I provide health education on different topics such as family planning, seasonal diseases, antenatal care, post-natal care, personal and environmental hygiene.”

— Zulaikha, a community health worker in Bamyan Province

Zulaikha is a community health worker (CHW) in the village of Lay-Lay, one of the most remote areas of Bamyan Province. Lay-Lay is almost an hour and a half away from the nearest health clinic and it is difficult for villagers to travel such a long distance to receive medical care. CHWs like Zulaikha -- village residents trained in first aid and basic medical care -- provide essential health services to the members of their community thanks to training and assistance from USAID's Health Services Support Project.

Zulaikha takes her position as a CHW very seriously and wants nothing but the best in health education and care for the 62 households in her village. “I always want my villagers, especially mothers and children, to be healthy,” she says, “Whenever I receive training, I oblige myself to transfer that knowledge to my villagers and especially to family health action (FHA) group members.”

“In addition to transmitting the knowledge that I gain to my community, I travel twice every week to the Dahan-e-Sabzak Comprehensive Health Center to acquire new skills like giving injections safely,” she adds. “Doing this ensures that I routinely gain new knowledge and skills that can be used to support my community.”

The promotion of health education has many benefits for the community. For example, knowledge about family planning methods and proper usage can lead to a reduction in the maternal mortality rate.

Zulaikha's most memorable experience as a CHW occurred in the middle of the night. “At 12:30 a.m. one rainy winter night, one of the FHA group members knocked on my door,” she described. “She was holding a small child in her arms and told me that he was very sick, but she did not have any way of getting to the clinic. The child couldn't sleep because of a fever and the woman asked for my help. Luckily, I had information on first aid care and medication, which reduced the fever. I spent the rest of the night with the child, and in the morning, I referred the mother to the clinic for further care. In a few days, the child had regained his health. I feel incredibly proud of myself and my FHA group for being able to serve our community together.”